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ABSTRACT

Joseph Cyprien Nadal's "Dictionnaire d'Eloquence Sacree" is an outstanding work because of Nadal's thorough treatment of all the elements young speakers should know as they embark on a platform career. The most important of these elements are invention, disposition, style, memory, and delivery. In addition, the book discusses five duties of the Christian orator, provides sound advice on impromptu speaking, offers original ideas on argumentative disposition, serves as a model for publishing a multivolume rhetorical encyclopedia, and cautions preachers about plagiarism. Such information is invaluable to all speakers. (DF)

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THE MOST SIGNIFICANT RHETORICAL WORK IN FRENCH IS:

L'Abbé Joseph Cyprien Nadal's
Dictionnaire d'Eloquence Sacrée
(Paris: Migne, 1851)

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As the previous speakers have rightly noted, anyone who dares to label a particular book as the most significant work in a discipline, even in a selected country, exudes a great deal of presumption. He dares to tell his audience that he believes his reading and understanding permit him to make such judgments. I confess less confidence in November 1985 than I think I had earlier this year.

While I have information--in most cases firsthand--on some 235 books and essays published in France since the advent of printing in that country (1470), fear still haunts me that some in my audience will have read one I have not seen, examined one I have not known, and will have reserved choice words for my arrogance for rushing in where angels fear to tread.

Nonetheless, as a member of this panel, I too will nominate a favorite. As your program indicates, it is Joseph Nadal's Dictionnaire d'Eloquence Sacrée, published but not written by Jacques Migne.

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Some of you will wonder why I have passed over: Ignace Pao-Koh's Deux Sophistes Chinois,[1] which gives us new information about two ancient Chinese sophists, or Fenelon's wellknown Dialogues,[2] or Thomas Charland's "Artes Praedicandi: Contributions à l'Histoire de la Rhêtorique au Moyen âge,[3]" or perhaps Jean François Marmontel's multi-volume encyclopedic Elements de Littérature.[4] Each of these, as well as dozens of other works, provides intellectual nourishment to English readers. But each left me wanting more. Nadal came the closest to treating all those elements I think the young speaker should know as he embarks on a platform career. And so I unabashedly bring him to your attention.

In this lengthy encyclopedic work--c. 650,000 words, plus appendices[5]--arranged alphabetically, the author brings together ideas from many writers--some 60 in all--who write on both secular and sacred rhetoric. Nadal not only lists and describes words, principles, and concepts, he also critiques them--praising some, faulting others. He will define, often in Aristotelian fashion, quote authors who support particular views, but not hesitate to show the inadequacy of their positions. For example, under "Action Oratoire" Louis Riccoboni sees it as the joining of voice to bodily action in order to provide expression for thought. Incomplete, counters Nadal, for it omits, among other things, the fact that different topics demand different sorts of action. Accordingly, he expands the idea, noting delivery's importance, its function in achieving ends, its qualities, and those obstacles which can corrupt it.[6]

In his discussion Nadal includes lengthy excerpts from ancient and modern authors--Latin and French, chiefly--thereby broadening the reader's view of the concept or practice. Perhaps the whole work began to weigh on him because the reader notes that the earlier articles seem better organized and perhaps more helpful than the later ones.

Clearly, the author has written the reference volume for seminarians studying a variety of areas of religious discourse. While they will find the materials organized differently than in Aristotle's Rhetoric or Cicero's De Oratore, they will study many of the same principles: three types of speeches, three means of proof,[7] five duties (officia) of the speaker, etc. This paper will seek to bring together Nadal's views on invention, disposition, style, memory, and delivery, dispersed under various alphabetical entries throughout the work.

I INVENTION

Invention, the heart of secular rhetoric for two millenia, also gets the palm from this French abbe.[8] But by invention he means not the opinions of man but the thoughts of God. Study, particularly of Holy Scripture, along with reflection, constitutes the foundation for what the pulpiteer should say.[9] They carry special force. At the same time, young preachers should observe and analyze the works of biblical orators, Church Fathers, and selected French clergymen, applying their principles to speaking situations.

Invention is a two-tined fork: As it relates to the discourse, it provides content for preaching; as it pertains to the speaker, it signifies the skill by which he finds the content, whether from his own talent, the art and precepts of rhetoric, or experience--or all three.[10] Invention, then, consists, in finding in a given subject the means of attaining the desired end.[11] This involves, proofs, the foundations for reason, and reason itself which clarifies and shows relationships, and can lead to the true basis of revelation. Reason also condemns the sin in our life.[12]

The preacher may use syllogisms which, while not found in ordinary conversation or public discourse, form part of the larger reasoning process.[13] He should possess perfect logic to discern truth from error, certainty from uncertainty, the obvious from the probable.[14]

In quoting Scripture, as part of the reasoning process, the speaker may/may not cite the Vulgate text, depending upon whether the audience understands Latin. But wherever he uses such references he should carefully select and faithfully translate them.[15]

If logic helps in discerning truth, commonplaces (<u>lieux communs</u>) aid the compositional process, probe the memory, and direct the listeners' attention. But knowing the works of skillful writers and effective speakers will help more than the unsystematized statements and illustrations which commonplaces provide.[16]

Thus, history has an important place.[17] It comes in three varieties:

A. saintly history, that which deals with people and their lives;

B. church history, with its details of dogmas and councils; and

C. profane history, which discusses secular politics and military matters.

The first two provide excellent sources for examples to support and embellish the speaker's ideas.

If the speaker lacks opportunity to prepare, what suggestions will help in extemporaneous speaking (improvisation)? Nadal tells the preacher who would speak on a known subject but without preparation to call upon his memory and then:

1. eliminate extraneous things from the mind and establish a plan to follow;

2. latch onto that part of the topic with which one most agrees in principle;

3. develop each part without confusing it with the other parts; and

4. limit the final product to a proper time frame.

Reading the works of skillful orators will increase one's precision and ability at this kind of delivery.

Finally, given the universal nature of the human condition, daily life with its varied opportunities commands some attention from the Christian orator. He may preach acceptably on the virtues and vices if he:

1. explains and describes them;

2. presents grounds (les motifs) for adopting the one and avoiding the other;

3. suggests means of embracing virtue and eluding vice;[18] and

4. heeds sound instruction.

II DISPOSITION

Nadal looks at the second of the five offices, arrangement, under a variety of headings.[19] He hypothesizes seven parts to the sermon: introduction, proposition, division, narration, confirmation, refutation, and peroration, but not always does the speaker need all of them.[20] He should however always include at least the introduction, proposition, proof and peroration.[21] In parts like the confirmation and refutation the speaker should prove each main point, apply emotional appeals, then conclude, followed by a transition to the next point.

The sensitive orator will consider which of two kinds of arrangements to use: nature, which grows out of the material itself--*inartistic*, Aristotle would call it[22]--and *artistic* which the speaker superimposes upon the context. Three questions will help one to systematize his thoughts:

1. *Quem fructum*? That is, what *result* does one seek in his listeners? What moral needs do listeners have?

2. *Quibus argumentis*? That is, what *argument* will best achieve this end? What themes will touch them most effectively?

3. *Quo ordine*? That is, what *order* will most likely achieve my ends?

In every case the most important idea must prevail.

What benchmark will enable the preacher to know if he has arranged his ideas correctly? Here Nadal suggests a unique test: place the major premise in the introduction, the minor in the various mainpoints, the proofs in the body, and the conclusion in the peroration. (It does work, by the way.)[23]

If the exordium prepares listeners for what follows, the peroration demands more tact than any other portion of the speech, save refutation. Correcting false ideas of one's audience and doing so at various points in the oration, demands not only great skill but accuracy and urbanity.

In sum, the preacher should devise a coherent systematic arrangement of ideas. Anything less will embarrass even the most godly priest.

III ELOCUTION

Adlai Stevenson once observed, in commenting on the qualities of effective speaking, that a speech is not an essay on its hind legs. While Stevenson may have read no French rhetorics, Nadal said the same thing more than a century before: "un sermon n'est pas une dissertation, ni une leçon d'école."[24] Thus, the preacher's style contrasts with that of the theologian and philosopher.[25]

Style, the manner of expressing by words what the preacher earlier reasoned,[26] has five qualities: harmony, clarity, dignity, purity and propriety, all of which one finds in the three traditional kinds of style: simple (for teaching), temperate (for pleasing), and sublime (for moving).

Beauty of expression together with beauty of thought form the basis for a perfect discourse. To effect this kind of expression one should:

1. eliminate everything contrary to purity or clarity of language;

2. consider the harmony of expression;

3. select words appropriate to the topic; and

4. then compose in the manner dictated by the ear.[27]

(Note the final test: the ear.)

Thus, Nadal, years before Herbert Spencer's famous dictum re. the "economy of style," cautioned that too many words obscure meaning.[28] Which words to use becomes a function of what the speaker intends to do: whether to prove,[29] to move,[30] or to embellish.[31]

France, like all countries, heard a speech of the marketplace and backyard, which differed from that of the pulpit. Do some inferior modes of expression not deserve the label "style"? No, says the author. Even the meanest has its own character.

IV MEMORY

On the subject of memory, Nadal, like numerous other writers, has little to say. But among the few things he does mention we read that:

1. the preacher should not memorize his sermons, since the practice limits his freedom to clarify ideas; but

2. in one's early years of preaching, however, memorizing may serve him well.[32]

V DELIVERY

Nadal has much to say about delivery,[33] devoting probably as much space to it as to invention. Perhaps he regards it highly because erudition, piety, and virtue will help little if one cannot talk plainly.

As with many other concepts, he finds current definitions of delivery unsatisfactory. Louis Riccoboni, whom Nadal does not tire of faulting, sees it as the art of joining gesture to speaking in order [for the audience?] to feel more fully the expressed thoughts.[34] Finding this unacceptable, he believes it should consider the details of the discourse, its parts, and the content which may dictate the tone of delivery. Listeners reflecting upon delivery should see it as natural, varied, expressive and proper (bienséante)--all of which give respectability to preaching.[35]

Gestures, whose principal tools are the head, arms, and hands, should represent the moods and sentiments of the soul, generating impressions which words alone can not. Among the fourteen caveats concerning gestures he cautions about:

1. raising hands higher than the shoulders and lowering them below the waist;

2. gesturing with both hands at the same time, as if one were swimming;

3. using the left hand alone;[36] and

4. resting the unused hand on one's chest rather than on the lectern.[37]

But if Nadal frowns at prevailing ideas about gesturing, he also suggests ways to improve them, including:

1. Watch a declaimer who will show one what not to do;

2. Observe the great orators who will help more than can written theory; and

3. practice in front of a critic.[38]

What determines the best gestures? Not abstract theory, but practical feeling; the sentiment of the heart dictates the proper action.[39] But gestures can accomplish much: one priest with zeal can do more than five without it.[40]

In addition, the preacher communicates a great deal by his appearance. In walking or standing, if the sacred orator carries his head high, it suggests arrogance, if low, timidity, to the side, nonchalance, but in the center, freedom and nature's intended way.[41]

The voice, the other of the two components in delivery, plays a dominant role in preaching, while depending least on the human will. The author lays down that principle American tourists to the orient and Europe have long known: speak loudly enough, distinctly enough, and slowly enough--in one's mother tongue--and you will increase clarity![42] At this most of us would demur.

At the same time, the kind of speech, whether a debate or panegyric, as well as the emotions of the soul, designates the usage of the voice.

The speaker must take care not to damage his vocal mechanism by straining either momentarily or talking uselessly or argumentatively. Walking gently during the day and retiring at a decent hour of the night will help maintain adequate vocal equipment and production.[43]

If one does not preach "uselessly," unconcerned about what others think, what principles govern the length of time the Christian orator should speak? Simple! When he has said all he should, stop! Three-quarters of an hour normally will suffice, though at retreats an hour might serve well.[44]

Finally, after advising how to improve delivery, the author notes that several factors contribute to negative perceptions of it, among which he lists:

A. lack of preparation;

B. timidity;

C. fear of humiliation, and a desire for praise;

D. general responsiveness to listeners;[45] and

E. failure of the preacher to realize the grandeur of his mission.

In conclusion, I pick Nadal's Dictionnaire as the most significant rhetorical book in French because it:

1. treats all the five duties of the Christian orator, four of them in complete and interesting fashion;

2. provides sound advice on impromptu speaking, before many modern authors thought of such things;

3. provides original ideas on argumentative disposition, when he suggests couching the major premise, minor premise and conclusion in the introduction, main points, body, and peroration, respectively;

4. serves as a model for us, 135 years later, to publish our own multi-volume rhetorical encyclopedia; and

5. cautions preachers about plagiarism, particularly in urban areas where such practices may be discovered!

What Aristotle said of wealth, I would say about the Dictionnaire: its benefits consist not so much in possessing it as in using it.

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ENDNOTES

* The substance of this paper was given at the Speech Communication Association National Convention, Denver, Colorado, November, 1985. A fuller title of the Nadal book reads as follows: Dictionnaire d'Eloquence Sacrée, Contenant, avec l'exposition de quelques principes élémentaires sur l'art de bien dire et sur l'éloquence Chrétienne, et les règles spéciales que l'on doit observer dans les divers genres de prédication.

1. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1953)

2. (Paris: F. Delaulne, 1718)

3. In Publications de l'Institute d'Etudes Médiévales d'Ottawa (Paris: Philosophique J. Vrin, 1936)

4. (Paris: La Rochelle, 1787)

5. The first appendix, "La Rhétorique de Prédicateur," came from the pen of the Bishop of Verona, Agostino (Cardinal) Valerio (1531?-1606), the second, "Le Prédicateur," from L'Abbé Jean Baptiste Morel, of the Cathedral of Notre Dame.

6. Nadal, Dictionnaire, col. 55. Hereafter all references to the Dictionnaire shall be noted by op cit. with the column number.

7. Nadal, recognizing the ancient principle of ethos, emphasizes the need for a holy life in the preacher. At one point he writes, "Rien de plus contraire à l'éloquence, et surtout à l'éloquence chrétienne, qu' une mauvaise vie." Op. cit. col. 801

8. He treats it under a variety of topics, including "Chaire d'éloquence," "Citations," "Histoire," "Invention," "Raison," et al.

9. He emphasizes this at two points. In col. 292 he states, "Les paroles de l'homme sont des paroles mortes; mais la parole de Dieu, pleine de vie, porte en elle une vertu qui touche et persuade." Later he says something of the same thing with "Il faut donc que le prédicateur parle, non comme un homme, mais comme Dieu parlerait lui-même." Col. 656.

10. Op. cit. col. 519. This echoes Aristotle's dictum that rhetoric is the faculty (dynamis) of discovering (theoresai) all the available means of persuasion. Rhetoric, $1355^{b}15$ff.

11. "L'invention oratoire consiste donc à trouver, dans un sujet donné, les moyens d'atteindre au but qu' on se propose." Op. cit., col. 519.

12. Op. cit., col. 811. Presumably he means that as we reflect on the world around us reason compels us to acknowledge the scandalous nature of the human heart.

13. Op. cit., col. 903. Earlier he notes that "Il est bon de penser comme le dialecticien, mais vous feriez mal de parler comme lui." Col. 541.

14. The Christian orator should have "une dialectique subtile." Op. cit., col. 539.

15. I shall not here review the twenty-five maxims for the use of citations.

16. "La raison et le bon sens, quidés par leur expérience, inspirient mieux les écrivains que tous les moyens artificiels qu' ils peuvent mettre en usage." Op cit., col. 535.

17. Op. cit., col. 467.

18. Ask: "What would Christ do?" Op cit., col. 940.

19. Including "Corps de discours," "Disposition," "Peroraison," "Plan du discours," and "Refutation."

20. Op. cit., cols. 246f.

21. In even the simplest oration "on retrouvera toujours un exorde, une proposition, une confirmation, et une péroraison." Op. cit., 247. At the same time, the three-point sermon "est une invention moderne." Op. cit., col. 252.

22. Based upon his notion of artistic and inartistic proofs. Rhetoric, $1355^{b}2$.

23. To illustrate: Take the Pope's recent dictum that clergy ordained within the Roman Catholic church, as well as members of its religious orders, must abandon secular employment. Cast into Nadal's framework the argument (with hypothetical proofs) might look like this:

Introduction: "For what purpose does the church ordain men? Why does anyone enter religious orders? Do we have so little need for the labor, the prayers, and commitment of these people that they must find employment elsewhere? The Pope has said, 'All men and women in religious orders must abandon secular employment.' What, then, shall we say about Father Thomas O'Leary?

I Fr. O'Leary was ordained in the Roman Catholic Church.

A. Records show he took his vows on October 13, 1976, in St. Mary's Cathedral, Lansing, Michigan.

B. His Grace, Bishop Charles Johnson presided.

C. Six hundred friends and relatives attended.

But Fr. O'Leary has responsibilities elsewhere.

II He was elected and subsequently served in the Michigan House of Representatives.

A. In 1982 he ran on the Democratic ticket for the Fifth legislative district in Michigan.

B. He won by a vote of 8,531 over his opponent who garnered 5,297, or so the Secretary of State reported.

C. He later served in the House from 1983-85.

D. He ran for a second term in 1984, and again received an overwhelming majority, roughly 2-1.

E. He currently serves in the Wolverine legislature.

F. His office number is Cass E-506; his telephone number (517) 381-7900.

Conclusion: The facts show that O'Leary (1) took his vows, (2) currently serves in the Michigan House, and (3) promised obedience to his church. We can only conclude that he must leave his secular employment."

24. Op. cit., col. 888.

25. The matter of style he treats under "Diction," "Figures," "Mots," "Noblesse du Style," and "Style."

26. Op. cit., col. 884.

27. Op. cit., col. 594.

28. ". . . retranchant les paroles qui ne servent de rien, le discours est court et net . . . [et] qu' après qu' on s'est formé une idée nette, qui se peut exprimer en peu de paroles." Op cit., col. 636.

29. Correction and omission (prétermission) work well here.

30. Apostrophe, prosopopeia, and exclamation are among the best for this.

31. Antithesis, irony, and description serve well in this case.

32. Op. cit., col. 557.

33. It finds its way into several of the articles including "Action Oratoire," "Débit Oratoire," "Gestes," "Mains," "Mouvements Oratoires," "Prononciation," "Tête," and "Voix."

34. "L'action est l'art de joindre à une prononciation variée l'expression du geste pour mieux faire sentir l'expression d'une pensée." Op. cit., col. 55. Perhaps this reflects his concern for the listener and not the speaker.

35. Op. cit., cols. 55f.

36. Guglielmo Audisio (1800-82), whom Nadal quotes, held this view, but Nadal sees no problem with it. Op. cit., col. 545.

37. Op. cit., cols. 433f.

38. Op. cit., cols. 440f.

39. Jesus said about the same thing, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Matt. 12:35 and Luke 6:45.

40. Op. cit., col. 947.

41. Op. cit., col. 906.

42. Every person has "naturellement un ton et une manière persuasifs" [sic].

43. Op. cit., col. 946.

44. Op. cit., col. 280. Long sermons, which usually result from poor preparation, are the principal reason listeners dislike the Word of God.

45. "Si on est froid, peu touché de ce qu' on prêche, il est impossible d' avoir une bonne action oratoire." Op. Cit., col. 66.